

Incorporation is big issue in Aptos area

By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

As 1990 rolls into 1991, the effort to incorporate Aptos isn't much farther along than it was a year ago.

Incorporation proponents spent six months fighting — and eventually losing — a dispute over whether a report on the environmental impacts of incorporation should be done.

That dispute delayed what is already a lengthy process, begun in 1987. In the "best-case scenario," it will be November 1992 before

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the citizens of Aptos vote on cityhood, said Pat McCormick, executive director of the Local Agency Formation Commission.

LAFCO is the agency that reviews the various steps toward incorporation and has the power to determine if an incorporation election should be held.

This spring, McCormick determined that an environmental impact report should be prepared to determine the feasibility of incorporation. LAFCO directors backed his decision.

Incorporation proponents, who will have to raise the money for the EIR, complained long and hard to the LAFCO board. The proponents argue that incorporation will only change the form of government in Aptos, not the environment.

The proponents, known as the
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Aptos Incorporation Group, sued LAFCO over the issue. Superior Court Judge Tom Black ruled in favor of LAFCO, but retained jurisdiction in any future disputes.

McCormick, who is working on a report that will detail the scope of the EIR, said last week he expects to end up back in court with the cityhood backers.

"I don't think the proponents will like the scope of work no matter what it is," McCormick said.

McCormick said he's been looking at the costs of EIRs for incorporation drives in other parts of California, and "it's scary."

A report for the proposed city of Windsor, north of Santa Rosa in Sonoma County, cost \$75,000. A report for American Canyon, north of Vallejo, came in a little higher than Windsor's. American Canyon has about 10,000 people, half the size of Aptos, but the same size geographically.

McCormick said it's his goal to keep the Aptos EIR as limited as possible, but he estimated it will cost at least \$25,000.

If the EIR ends up costing more than \$10,000, "We're going to take them to court," said Doug McConnell, one of the leaders of the Incorporation Group.

If the judge ends up ruling that an EIR costing more than \$10,000 is required, the Incorporation Group still intends to raise the money, McConnell said last week.

But if the cost is in the \$50,000 range, McConnell said, "We will have a tough time" raising the money. He said the Incorporation Group has several ideas on fund raising, but won't decide on one until the amount to be raised is known.

McConnell said the Incorporation Group discouraged large contributions from developers in the past, but will now accept them. He emphasized that the Incorporation Group is not controlled by development interests, and that anybody donating money is not buying promises.

McCormick said he hopes to reach a determination on the EIR scope by February.

Once an EIR is commissioned, it will be a year before the preparation and public review are completed.

Reg. Paj
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